

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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CONFIDENTIAL SANTIAGO 2691

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM PINT PFOR CI GR
SUBJECT: GERMAN AMBASSADOR DEFENDS "COLONIA DIGNIDAD"

REF: SANTIAGO A-4

1. IN RESPONSE TO WIRE SERVICE ACCOUNTS OF AN AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REPORT, FRG AMBASSADOR STRATLING RELEASED A STATEMENT MARCH 26 AFFIRMING THAT HE FOUND NO EVIDENCE THAT CHILEANS WERE BEING DETAINED AT A MYSTERY-SHROUDED GERMAN ENCLAVE IN SOUTH-CENTRAL CHILE KNOWN AS "COLONIA DIGNIDAD." STRATLING HAD VISITED THE EXTENSIVE AGRICULTURAL HOLDING NESTLED AGAINST THE ANDES NEAR LINARES SOME 350 KILOMETERS SOUTH OF SANTIAGO AFTER THE NOVEMBER 1976 UNHRC REPORT HAD IDENTIFIED IT AS ONE OF 12 UNAUTHORIZED PLACES CONTAINING CHILEAN PRISONERS (SEE REFAIR FOR FULL ACCOUNT OF HIS FINDINGS). THE STATEMENT SAID STRATLING HAD FOUND NOTHING TO SUBSTANTIATE SUCH ALLEGATIONS, NOR HAD GERMAN PHOTO INTERPRETATION EXPERTS IDENTIFIED ANYTHING CONFIRMING CHARGES THAT A CAMP WITH SPECIALLY EQUIPPED UNDERGROUND INSTALLATIONS EXISTED THERE. THE AMBASSADOR'S STATEMENT WAS THE MOST UNUSUAL ELEMENT IN A CURRENT CAMPAIGN TO POLISH UP DIGNIDAD'S LOCAL IMAGE.

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2. IN DEFENSE OF COLONIA DIGNIDAD, THE UNIVERSITY OF CHILE TV STATION FEATURED IT AS A TOPIC OF ITS WEEKLY HOUR INTERVIEW AND NEWS FEATURES PROGRAM "ELECTRO SHOCK." THE SHOW PORTRAYED THE 300-PLUS MEMBERS OF THE GERMAN COLLECTIVE SETTLEMENT AS VERY HARD WORKING AND SELF-SUFFICIENT CRAFTSMEN AND AGRICULTURISTS. THE

COLONY FARMS, RAISES CATTLE AND PRACTICES TRADE ON ITS EXTENSIVE LAND HOLDINGS. THE MEMBERS HAVE THEIR OWN SCHOOLS AND HOSPITALS, AND DO MUCH TO HELP THE LOCAL MAPUCHO INDIANS OF THE SURROUNDING AREA. SANTIAGO DAILY "EL MERCURIO" JOINED THE DEFENSE A FEW DAYS LATER IN AN EDITORIAL WHICH DESCRIBED THE CHARGES AS JUST MORE OF THE VARIED AND NEVER CEASING ATTACKS BY CHILE'S ENEMIES. IT SAID THE CHILEAN AUTHORITIES HAD INVESTIGATED THE CHARGES WHEN THEY WERE FIRST MADE AND FOUND THEM TO BE TOTALLY FALSE. THE EDITORIAL EXPRESSED HOPE THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD SUPPORT THE COLONY IN REFUTING THE CHARGES.

3. COMMENT: MOST RECENTLY AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL AND RADIO MOSCOW HAVE TOUTED CHARGES OF COLONIA DIGNIDAD'S SINSISTER TIES WITH THE INFAMOUS DIRECTORATE OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE (DINA). SINCE ITS FOUNDING COLONIA DIGNIDAD HAS BEEN OBJECT OF SPECULATION AND RUMOR. IN THE 60'S THE USUAL CHARGE WAS THAT THE COLONIA WAS A REFUGE FOR GERMAN NAZIS AND SOMEHOW LINKED TO A GROUP OF SIMILAR NAZIS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE REST OF THE WORLD. IF MEMORY SERVES, DURING THAT PERIOD THE CHILEAN CONGRESS AND THE GOC SAID THEY HAD LOOKED INTO THE ALLEGATIONS BUT FOUND NOTHING ALARMING. VARIOUS ATTEMPTS TO VERIFY CHARGES THAT THE AREA HAS RECENTLY BEEN USED AS A PLACE OF TORTURE OR DETENTION HAVE LIKEWISE FAILED TO PRODUCE EVIDENCE.

4. THE INTEREST OF THE GERMAN EMBASSY HERE IN COLONIA DIGNIDAD HAS BEEN SHARPENED BY EFFORTS ON THE PART OF CONFIDENTIAL

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INVESTIGATIVE REPORTERS FROM "STERN" MAGAZINE TO GET ON THE PREMISES AND FIND OUT WHAT WAS GOING ON. THE DCM AT THE FRG EMBASSY INFORMED US THAT RECENTLY A "STERN" REPORTER TRIED TO PENETRATE COLONIA DIGNIDAD. HE WAS TOLD TO LEAVE. BEFORE HE GOT BACK TO THE NEAREST TOWN HE WAS PICKED UP BY CARABINEROS, WHISKED OFF TO SANTIAGO AND PLACED ON THE NEXT FLIGHT TO GERMANY. THIS BUM'S RUSH COULD NOT HAVE BEEN BETTER DESIGNED TO PIQUE THE INTEREST OF INVESTIGATIVE REPORTERS.

5. IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT NOTHING HAS EVER BEEN PROVED AGAINST COLONIA DIGNIDAD, AN AIR OF MYSTERY CONTINUES TO SURROUND IT AND ITS ACTIVITIES.

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